



EUREGHA contributes to shaping the next Multiannual Financial Framework

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EUREGHA has officially contributed to the public consultation on **the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** launched by the European Commission. By sending its position on the next generation of EU financial programmes, EUREGHA makes sure the Commission takes into account the needs and interests of the public health sector and in particular regions and local authorities' needs when designing comprehensive proposals for the post-2020 EU budget.

Healthcare governance within the European Union is predominantly a competence of the individual Member States and often Regions. However, while the principle of subsidiarity embodies that, when possible and reasonable, decision-making power stays within the Member States, **there is a clear EU added value in supporting and improving public health policies and the provision of quality healthcare services across the EU**. As a matter of fact, the EU has an important role to play in improving public health, preventing and managing diseases, mitigating sources of danger to human health, and harmonizing health strategies between Member States.

A clear example of the EU added value in this sector is the **Directive 2011/24/EU on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare**. Adopted in 2011, it was an important step forward for European health policy, responding to the needs of EU citizens, as it ensures patients' rights to access safe and high-quality healthcare across national borders in the EU and their right to be reimbursed for such healthcare.

Moreover, in a context of demographic change, financing rising healthcare costs and access to a dignified and independent life for the ageing population will be central to the political debate. Within this framework, there are a lot of **new challenges** in the health sector which can be better tackled at EU level, such as **ageing society, patient-centered healthcare systems, eHealth, mHealth, health inequalities, prevention, personalized medicine, antimicrobial resistance**, to name only a few.

The next generation of EU financial programmes must provide the adequate tools to address these challenges, as investing in health means investing in people and contributing to the development of more sustainable and resilient societies. The provision of quality healthcare

and long-term care is also part of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, which aims to further develop the social dimension of the Union. The next EU budget must provide the adequate resources to support and implement the Pillar.

The importance of the healthcare sector is also reflected in the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which clearly state that ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages is essential to sustainable development.** The Pillar of Social Rights and the SDGs will serve as a strategic framework for future policy implementation through the European Commission's legislative proposals, policy coordination, the European Semester, and EU funds and programmes.

Investing in the health sector plays a key role in this process and local and regional authorities must be empowered to improve the provision of healthcare services for everyone and contribute to the upward convergence of all EU regions for a fairer and more inclusive society.

With regard to health and wellbeing policies and programmes/initiatives, EUREGHA considers that there is a clear EU added value in supporting and facilitating:

- the scale-up of good practices, especially in prevention, screening and early diagnosis, active ageing and independent living, e.g. the **EIP-AHA and Reference Site Collaborative Network initiatives;**
- Investment in tangible and intangible infrastructures in the health sector through the crucial use of the **European Structural and Investment Funds;**
- The cross-border cooperation in the field of health, with particular reference to border regions and through **European Territorial Cooperation programmes** including **INTERREG;**
- The promotion of **patient-centered healthcare systems, with a value-based approach,** through the exchange of practices thanks to the EU Health programme
- The building of a critical mass for fighting against rare diseases, e.g. the **European Reference Networks;**
- A cross-sectoral approach to health in all relevant policies/programmes: ERASMUS plus with initiatives such as the **Blueprint for sectoral skills,** the EaSI programme with regard to **social innovation** and integrated care, the Life programme to prevent **environmental disease;**
- The fight against epidemic diseases, the control of food safety and the prevention of environmental diseases, the prevention of chronic diseases and frailty, with particular reference to **Horizon2020** and the **Third health programme projects/initiatives** (e.g. JPI on cancer, JPI chronic diseases, Joint action Advantage)

- The creation of a digital single market for health and care innovation.

Referring to the Health programme, Horizon 2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds, EUREGHA considers that the next MFF should:

- continue to invest in a **robust new generation of the Health programme**, as mentioned in the European Parliament draft report (2017/2052(INI)), thus bringing some changes in order to support a **stronger regional participation to the programme**. The exchange of policies, practices and capacity building among local and regional authorities is crucial because LRAs are at the forefront in the prevention and care of the population and often have legal exclusive or shared competence, with the national level, in the health sector;
- recognize the fundamental role of the **Cohesion policy and European Structural and Investment funds in supporting investment in services and tangible and intangible infrastructures in the health sector, create better synergies with EU skill policies and allow for better cooperation among regions across the EU;**
- Support the European territorial cooperation and the **INTERREG programme also for cross-border cooperation in the field of health;**
- Ensure adequate budget to support capacity building, skills development, start-ups and digitization, building on initiatives such as the **European Smart specialization platform**.

Referring to the Health programme, Horizon 2020 and European Structural and Investment Funds, EUREGHA considers that within the next MFF:

- The **programmes and funds should remain separated but harmonisation of rules and alignment of timeline should be ensured;**
- **Synergies** should be granted between the **FP9 health priorities and the future health programme**, keeping in mind the strategic need for two separate programmes dealing with R&I and public health policies;
- Synergies should be also particularly foreseen with: the **future Life programme** for initiatives and projects concerning environmental health and diseases; the **future EaSI programme** for initiatives and projects dealing with social innovation, health inequalities, accessibility and disability; the **future Erasmus plus programme** to tackle the skills demand in the health sector;
- An “**integrated project approach**” could be elaborated in order to finance, through a combination of different programmes and funds, the **scaling-up of initiatives with a strong regional dimension and a policy-oriented vision**. This would result

in overcoming a silos approach in the elaboration of EU, national, and regional policies.

- **Use of alternative funding** (e.g. crowdfunding) should be allowed to complement, for instance, co-financing of the European Structural and Investments Funds and ensure citizens engagement in policy making;
- **More flexibility in terms of budget adjustment** should be ensured.

Investing in the health and wellbeing of EU citizens is key in order to achieve broader policy objectives related to employment, growth, culture, sustainability, and justice. As a matter of fact, keeping people healthy and active for longer has a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness. Moreover, the healthcare sector has an important role to play in improving skills and creating jobs, as it employs 1 in 10 of the most qualified workers in the EU.

To conclude, improving the quality of life of all Europeans and building a more cohesive and social Europe which leaves no one behind is essential in order to move forward in the integration process and this cannot be done without sound investment in public health.